

\c2\garthoff
August 10, 1989

Commentaries on Raymond Garthoff, Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis, revised edition (Brookings, May 1989)

--When did the crisis start? Garthoff says the thirteen days started October 16 "from the time Washington discovered construction was under way..." Actually, the missiles were photographed on the 14th and the photos interpreted on the 15th. "Washington"--in the persons of nearly every subsequent member of the ExComm except the President--learned of the presence of Soviet missiles on the night of the 15th.

That meant they had over twelve hours to reflect on the significance of the presence before they met with the President at 11:57 the next morning (unlike the President, who learned of the presence about 8 AM). It also meant that most of them had already discussed the matter with one or more others the night before or Tuesday morning: e.g., Rusk and Nitze. Moreover, Nitze had been considering options for a number of days, having been convinced by DIA of the presence of the missiles before the photos were taken.

(Counting from the night of the 15th to the night of the 28th, or the late morning of the 28th, it was still a 13-day crisis for the Americans. It was a 5-6 day crisis for the Soviets (from Monday night--early Tuesday morning for them--to Sunday morning--late Sunday evening for them).

5 1/2 days

-- G says: supposedly both sides have become, as a result, "more prudent and more sharply aware of the need to avoid actions that could bring us again to the brink of war. But there is inadequate understanding in the United States as to why that event is called the "Caribbean crisis" in the Soviet Union, and how it could be seriously regarded as stemming even in part from American actions."

i.e. provoked by US actions + mistakes in Caribbean,

That is, there is inadequate understanding, even at top levels, as to what American actions brought us close to the brink on this past occasion, thus how to recognize what sorts of actions to avoid in future. Even in private at the time--still less in explanations given to the public--there was little awareness of plausible perception by the Soviets, or reality, of American provocation of the Soviet actions to which we were "responding."

Are Americans

This supported both a mood of American righteousness--which underpinned a violent response--and a sense of perplexity, uncertainty as to possible Soviet intentions which seemed almost incomprehensible, with a tendency to see them in the most ominous light. Again, the latter supported a violent response.

Perhaps all Powers present themselves as reacting to the illegitimate, aggressive actions of their rivals, especially when justifying their own violent, dangerous, and apparently lawbreaking actions, or "responses." But this is especially true of the whole Cold War ideology (for both sides). It involves not only misleading the public but confusing and misleading the elites themselves, and specifically, distorting intelligence analyses (with the analysts often unaware of the covert provocations, and constrained from pressing the causal role even of those initiatives of which they are aware, even as the possible "perceptions" by the opponent).

Thus, the ExComm itself shows no awareness in its discussions that the Turkish IRBMs had just become operational in April (see p. 60); Kennedy himself seemed to think of this as an Eisenhower decision, five years earlier, having no sense of responsibility for the actual deployment, even though he had raised the question of postponing it: as Eisenhower had actually done, for the very reasons that proved valid.

Indeed, Garthoff notes that on the day of Kennedy's speech, October 22, "with ceremonial fanfare, the first Jupiter missile launch position in Turkey was turned over to Turkish command. This fact, remarkably, has only recently been noted; it was not by the American leaders at the time. It explains why Khrushchev had felt a timely thing to complain about to Ambassador Kohler on October 16. Similarly, that the Jupiter missiles in Turkey first became operational in April 1962, in American hands, was unnoted in Washington but may have prompted Marshal Malinovsky to draw it to Khrushchev's attention at that time, contributing greatly to the decision on missile deployment in Cuba and to the genesis of the crisis." (60)

It is very difficult--though not quite impossible--for me to believe that Kennedy and McNamara and a few others managed to be unaware of the possible connection between their own covert actions against Cuba and secret contingency planning for invasion and the Soviet move. But it does seem to be the case--hard as it is to believe--that all US officials were ignorant of the actual events of

see
HSC
on 2/21
1968

deployment and operational status of the missiles in Turkey as plausible stimulants to the Soviet deployment.

Likewise, McNamara and Kennedy probably felt no responsibility for loading Europe with tactical nuclear weapons, since the program had been set earlier.

Moreover, the latter program was not unrelated to the Cuban Missile crisis either, to the extent that the latter was related to the Berlin Crisis, since Trachtenberg supports Ulam's emphasis on Soviet fears of German nuclear weapons as a source of that crisis.

Then, there was Khrushchev's embarrassing backdown on Berlin, perhaps partly provoked by (my) humiliating Gilpatric speech.

Given that many members of the ExComm were aware of Mongoose, it is remarkable that that seems totally absent from the transcripts of their talks: although that may well be a matter of censorship, reflected in the deleted portions. It would be an amazing example of self-censorship at the time if they really refrained from mentioning it in the larger group, when it came to trying to explain the Soviet action.

✓ {Garthoff, Jan. 12, 1990: Marginal comment: "But I believe probably so." (This supports the notion of the ExComm as a Big Store).}

Most
Chinese!

Of course, Soviet missiles were not a plausible response to Mongoose per se, except as this pointed toward invasion. Only a few of those present knew of EGL's emphasis on the need for invasion, {G--for Garthoff--checkmark in margin, indicating agreement} or of the pattern of exercises, and the urgent planning in October for possible invasion. [Does Garthoff recognize this now?]

OK -
I agree
- Garthoff
Carter
Garthoff, even at this late date, stresses the incorrectness of the Soviet expectations of American invasion of Cuba, emphasizing (with underlining), "But there was no firm American political decision or intention to invade Cuba before the crisis erupted in October 1962." (6) "There had not, however, been any decision by President Kennedy to invade Cuba or to overthrow the Castro regime if nonmilitary means failed to topple it. That was the situation in April-May 1962..." (9).

Again (after describing McNamara's memo of October 2, 1962,

listing six possible contingencies that might lead to American invasion), "But no decision had been made to attack Cuba." (This is probably true, but how does Garthoff actually know this? The mere absence of documentation on it, far from proving this, tells almost nothing at all. And assurances by McNamara or Bundy, tell little more; they were denying even that contingency planning existed till documents were produced, and still describe it, absurdly, as "routine.")

But Garthoff never actually cites a Soviet supposition that Kennedy had made a firm decision {Garthoff checkmark}; simply beliefs that Kennedy "would" or probably would do so, perfectly see. McP sound predictions under the circumstances despite the absence of a "decision." He points out that the Soviets and Cubans "correctly assumed" that the exercises in the spring of 1962 were testing a war plan for invasion. They knew, from penetration of Mongoose, that that program was aimed at the overthrow of Castro; and they could calculate just as well as Lansdale that that aim would require invasion.

It was hardly a "distorted impression" (7) to see the exercises as "part of the preparation for further direct US military action against Cuba," which is what G says later Soviet accounts "charged" (Statsenko, in 1977), merely "because the plans were contingency plans, not [G's underlining] plans adopted in pursuance of a decision to invade."

Indeed, G goes on to say, "Nonetheless, they seemed to Cuban and Soviet intelligence analysts and leaders to reflect a firm intention, or at least an active hostility with probable intent." (my underlining). Whose perception is distorted?

As late as mid-September 1962, G reports Khrushchev asking Bolshakov "if he believed the US was planning to attack Cuba." (This question, coming this late date, doesn't suggest that Soviet moves up to then--the missiles having just arrived in Cuba--were critically based on certainty that Kennedy had determined on invasion). Bolshakov noted political pressures on the President, and "said he believed the United States would attack. Khrushchev interjected that 'he [Kennedy] himself wouldn't mind getting revenge.'" (9)

Neither of these opinions implies certainty that Kennedy would attack nor that Kennedy had yet made a definite committed decision.

{G checkmark} And Khrushchev's guess was shrewd, by all accounts of ✓
Bobbie Kennedy's attitude during Mongoose (see Branch and Crile,
Harper's). (It is not clear that "better communication" would have
improved the realism of this understanding of Administration
motives.) {G checkmark}

G emphasizes the lack of "firm decision" almost like McGeorge Bundy. Thus, while acknowledging that the explicit aims of Mongoose were to bring about a "popular revolt" (or appearance of one) in Cuba, "a development that in turn was expected both to require [for success] and to justify American military intervention, in October 1962" (!), G stresses that the "projected program was, however, not accepted by the administration, which at that time approved only the intelligence infiltration stage of the plan. Moreover, the approved guidelines, issued on March 14, while recognizing that 'final success [in overthrowing the Castro regime] will require decisive US military intervention," authorized only..."

But this could easily give the impression--as in newspaper accounts of these recently-declassified plans--that the more ambitious goals and strategy had been rejected. {G marginal note: Could (give this impression). I would agree future option not rejected.} This was not at all the case; there was nothing more than the absolutely standard postponement of commitment on later phases of the program, which continued to be cited in all Mongoose documents as eventually necessary to success.

These assertions that invasion was necessary to the attainment of US aims are never contradicted in the available documentation, nor are the aims modified. All the diplomatic and military moves G describes are consistent with making full preparations for an October invasion which would--as usual--only be "decided" at the last possible moment.

(5)

When did the President "decide" to put any combat units into Vietnam? To make an open-ended commitment of troops? To send 500,000 troops (the figure described as necessary in July 1965 by the Marine Commandant to LBJ)? When did LBJ "decide" to launch an open-ended bombing attack on NVN?

And when was it reasonable for the Soviets and NVNese to begin expecting these courses--even with some definiteness? A good deal sooner! They were all a good deal more than "possible," from the spring of 1964, if not earlier. Just as, looked at honestly and

objectively, the belief that an American invasion of Cuba was much more than "possible" by the end of 1962 was a lot better than "not unreasonable" in the spring of 1962. (9)

--Faits accomplis. "It was during my visit to Bulgaria that I had the idea of installing missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba without letting the United States know they were there until it was too late to do anything about them." (10)

apn
(over McN) The usual understanding of the crisis is that this strategy failed. Kennedy appeared, in public, more than prepared to do something about the missiles he had found; either they had been found "too early"--which, most analysts have inferred, "was almost sure to occur, reflecting a failure of Soviet camouflage and underestimate of American surveillance"--or else, he might have been equally determined whenever he found them.

Indeed, the missiles are seen as purely counterproductive from this perspective, creating an overwhelming incentive to attack Cuba where Kennedy had felt none before (despite public pressure to attack or invade before the missiles were found).

Yet what is revealed of McNamara's attitude in the transcripts, and what McNamara now confirms and says applied to the President as well, implies that Khrushchev's tactical goal was not only reasonable, but that it succeeded, in terms of the private intentions of McNamara and the President.

Almost from the beginning, they concluded that the mere possibility that the warheads might be present and the missiles operational--which could not be excluded from the start--virtually precluded an American attack on the missiles. (The President may have reached this conclusion hours or a day after McNamara). They--especially the President--did not stress this judgment in front of the ExComm, still less to the JCS or the public.

Here is a case where McNamara implies that he had "decided" not to attack or invade, early in the crisis, so that preparations to do so were a bluff. He believes the President agreed with him. Others suggest that the President had not fully decided either way. {marginal note: I do not believe President had definitely decided no attack.}

... "not to attack"?

✓ However, even if Mcnamara was right that the President had "decided," the pressures described by Sorensen might, as Sorensen suggests, have forced his hand, changed his decision.

I.e., Khrushchev's strategy could yet have failed--as JFK, at least partly bluffing, claimed it had--if the crisis had persisted.

(That is, predictions about actions and the course of events are not, and should not be, synonymous with predictions about "decisions," as Bundy sometimes suggests, any more than--as Bundy emphasizes--they are synonymous with predictions about plans or preparations.)

Thus, Khrushchev's attempted *Fait Accompli* not only might have succeeded, it (evidently: at least, so McNamara claims, and I hypothesize) did succeed, in the mind of the President. But--as Khrushchev evidently failed to imagine beforehand--this did not stop JFK from pretending to be still willing to "do something about it," doing so plausibly in a way the Soviets could not discount, and in a way that created public pressures that might have led him "unhappily" to carry out the threats, as control was lost on both sides. That is, to say that JFK was willing to pretend to be willing to "do something about it" (beyond the blockade) is to say that JFK was willing to risk that he might actually do something about it. ✓ *consequence*

In this sense it might be hypothesized that any open threat is like the choice of a randomized strategy: even if the threatener regards it as a pure bluff, the chance that it will eventually be carried out (unless this is physically impossible) may not be zero. *K on C-1*

This case shows that a *Fait Accompli* can lead to the confrontation it was meant to forestall, even without being botched, misconceived, or prematurely revealed (as the phrase *Fait Malaccompli* suggests).

It did help Kennedy, and hurt Khrushchev, that the discovery was made early enough that it could be claimed publicly that the missiles were not yet operational (even though the CIA could not offer, privately, absolute assurance of this). Thus the risks of action (which were properly high enough in the President's mind to deter him) could be claimed to be low enough to permit action without losing public support. The President's bluff that he was willing to risk attacking was plausible, given his ability to reassure the public, and his willingness and political ability to take the risks of the blockade.

At what stage of deployment did Khrushchev expect^{yes} the missiles to be discovered? If he thought it would be later, this was a miscalculation. If he thought it might be at the stage it happened, and that this would deter the President from attacking, this was reasonable, even right, more so than generally believed. Yet it would still have been a miscalculation, because it failed to consider that the President would not be deterred from making powerful and plausible threats, even though they might be (and probably were) bluffs. *N in 1969, after Oct. 15 - alert.*

The account on p. 13 suggests that Khrushchev did expect the missiles to be found later, when they were fully ready. Or rather, he did not expect them to be found at all; he expected to reveal them to Kennedy, after the election. {G checkmark} Apparently his military told him the deployment could be made secretly: which proved to be correct for the transportation phase (a surprise to the US), but of course, not for overhead reconnaissance.

I am not fully convinced yet that Khrushchev felt certain that the missiles would be undetected till he revealed them. The emphasis on completing this just before the election still suggests to me an "insurance" plan: that Kennedy would be unwilling to acknowledge the presence of the missiles before the election (in part, because he would not want to attack them), and that he would be able to keep the secret--if Khrushchev did--till after the election. If Khrushchev reasoned thus, it was the last assumption that was wrong.

Either the missiles were found earlier than Khrushchev expected (the Soviets do believe there was a simple failure to camouflage them), and/or Khrushchev overestimated the length of time Kennedy could manage to keep this particular secret from the electorate, during an election campaign in which it was highly relevant and when the military would have wanted to leak it to force Kennedy to act.

Khrushchev may have been misled by Eisenhower's ability to keep the secret of what a U-2 found over the Soviet Union in the late Fifties. He may have missed the point that a finding of no missiles would be kept very obediently by the Air Force, since publicity would have hurt their budget, whereas a discovery of actual missiles, in the Soviet Union or, in 1962, in Cuba, was bound to be leaked very soon. {G checkmark}

In the event, the missiles were found a week or so too early to keep a lid on them till the election, despite Kennedy's elaborate and unprecedented preparations to hold the information closely even within the intelligence community (headed by a Republican). Perhaps 10 days later, Kennedy might well have acted as--I conjecture--Khrushchev may have hoped and perhaps wrongly counted on.

Another effect of finding them this early--before it was clear that they were armed and operational--was that Kennedy was led to make his initial commitment at the first meeting of the ExComm that "the missiles must go." This commitment, made in front of the Republicans Dillon and McCone among others (which may have been a purpose of the ExComm format, and of Dillon's presence), was crucial in setting the terms of later ExComm discussion.

If the first meeting had been held after he had had 12-24 hours to reflect on the presence--time enough to realize that the missiles might be armed--would he have made this commitment? (He would then have realized from the start that attack was ruled out, and that a trade would be necessary to get them out. He might have wanted to leave the option of "eating them," as Nitze had put it to Rusk the night before. Or, if the missiles had been clearly operational by the time they were found, likewise.

The new evidence, and G's account, suggests the primary Soviet motive, after all, was as K said in his memoirs, "It was clear to me that we might very well lose Cuba if we didn't take some decisive steps in her defense." Ignorant of Mongoose and invasion preparations, American analysts--nearly all of whom dismissed this alleged motive--seem never to have considered how Khrushchev might have been expected to feel about the prospect of "losing Cuba." This is still true, even now they know of the Soviet expectations and the basis for them, as reflected in an unwillingness to take this motive as seriously as others or to give it primacy.

Far from inferring Soviet motives on the basis of a (realistic) mirror image of ourselves, there is first a failure to see ourselves realistically in a mirror, and then a failure to imagine that Soviets might react very similarly. This is a case when that approach would have worked quite well, by Khrushchev's testimony.

Indeed, he seems to have wanted to encourage that approach: to stimulate Americans to begin to "put themselves in his shoes," see Soviets as having feelings like Americans ("if you prick me, do I

*having feelings (like ours), that should matter (to us)
(common humanity: not all sympathy!)*

not bleed") and as being equally worthy of consideration, respect.
In a word, equals, parity of status. "The Americans had surrounded our country with military bases and threatened us with nuclear weapons, and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointed at you; we'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine." (10)

As the transcript shows, especially on October 27, this worked pretty well with the President personally. Not only did he see the parallel with Turkey, and preferred even a trade to attacking the missiles, but he (like McNamara and Bundy) saw the strategic situation as basically parity, despite the US numerical superiority.
{G marginal note: but mutual deterrence.} *(can without Cuban missiles).*

unlike JCS & Bundy.
But--as Khrushchev failed to weigh adequately--the American official position had not at all acknowledged strategic parity--as my Gilpatric speech demonstrated!-- or "moral parity" (or equal humanity). Hence to acknowledge diplomatic parity by either accepting the missiles in Cuba or trading the Turkish missiles against them would have been "premature," a radical shift in NATO and Cold War premises, contradicting Kennedy's earlier warnings and initial position in the crisis.

JFK & Bundy
Moreover, many members of the President's own ExComm would have disagreed with him on these judgments, still more many in the public and the Alliance, and it would have been politically costly for him to express and act on his views in this context. Better, some advisors thought (like Bundy, on the 27th) to take some risks in pursuit of denying parity of status: risks that Bundy and others underestimated, then and still.

Khrushchev did think that "In addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call the 'balance of power.'" 40-70 missiles wouldn't fully do this, but a few hundred would go far to equalize at least first-strike capabilities. But just because much of the world would have seen this as very significant, and many officials--disagreeing with JFK, McNamara and Bundy--would have agreed, there was bound to be much more inclination than Khrushchev calculated to prevent this (though it might have been by trade rather than by attack).

[Is it possible that the thought of missiles in Cuba had occurred to Khrushchev as early as the Gilpatric speech in October? What discussion had there been as to how to repair the "balance of

power" quickly, after that speech? Was it the aftermath of this speech, and this general issue, that led Khrushchev to think of the missiles--perhaps for the first time, or perhaps not--when Malinovsky drew his attention to the Turkish missiles in April, when they first became operational? see 12]

Note that Malinovsky emphasized that the Turkish missiles could strike the SU in 10 minutes, whereas Soviet missiles needed 25 to reach the US. What difference would this have made, in 1962? To be sure, in the late '70's, this was the Soviet concern about the Pershing IIs: quite properly by that time, given radar warning and readiness procedures.

Khrushchev "then mused on whether the SU shouldn't do the same thing in Cuba, just over the horizon from the United States. The Americans, after all, had not asked Soviet permission."

What he seems to have missed is that the Americans regarded Turkey as being in their sphere of influence and interest--despite its proximity to the SU--and that although he regarded Cuba likewise, the Americans by no means had reconciled themselves to the "loss" of Cuba from their sphere of control. The US was not close to acknowledging a "parity" between the Soviet role in Cuba and the American relation to Turkey! (Not even yet, 25 years later). That was especially true for those Americans (the majority) who did not acknowledge a strategic parity in 1962.

✓ Another miscalculation: "Faced with a fait accompli of secretly installed missiles, Khrushchev told Alekseyev, 'the pragmatic Americans will not dare to take irrational risks,' and would learn to live with them just as the Soviet Union had learned to live with American missiles in Turkey, Italy and West Germany." 15.

Again--contrary to what I thought at the time--he was not wrong about Kennedy's and McNamara's unwillingness to take the risk of attacking the missiles. But he missed the possibility that they would choose to take the risk of blockading Soviet shipping: also irrational, but less. And the risk of their attacking the missile ultimately--however reluctantly and nervously--was not zero, either, though McNamara is reluctant to acknowledge this. Their bluff created pressures and a context in which their control might have been lost.

There was a lesson here for the Soviets (and us) to learn about what irrational risks pragmatic Americans might take.

According to Alekseyev there was complete unanimity in the meeting about the plan (although Mikoyan and Gromyko had expressed doubts earlier). This might have been an example of Janis' "groupthink": but as in Cuba I (and Cuba II!) the leader had made his own views known. G sees this as a case where the Presidium was simply called in to ratify a decision already and to display unanimity (as Bundy sees the meetings of July 1965). {G note: More Presidium discussion than I acknowledged. New interviews have changed his mind.}

On the secrecy needed for a *Fait Accompli*: the Soviets clearly feared a blockade if they revealed the move during the transportation phase. (Contrary to the Americans who assured the Soviets in Cambridge, 1987, that it would have been much safer for them to have made the whole process open). bor.

And they were not wrong--to the amazement of US intelligence--about their ability to keep that process secret. They just "stayed off the phone" (as I did with the distribution of the Pentagon Papers). Everything was hand-carried. This does suggest that the absence of SI about Soviet ICBMs in 1959-61 was a less reliable indicator of the non-existence of a missile gap than some supposed.

--18. The Soviet contingent included four reinforced motorized rifle regiments, for security of the missile sites [from Cubans?!] {G note: US or Cuban emigre commandos} and other forces and as a 'trip wire' in case of a large US attack." (my italics). Also, a regiment of 42 IL-28 light bombers "for attacking any invasion force." [Why would they suppose these would survive US air strikes? Was this another trip wire?] {G note: reassurance to Castro re emigre invasion.}

See the similarity to NATO strategy: both vulnerable first-use forces to threaten local control of nuclear first use, and a large investment of superpower forces, to increase the plausibility both of a local decision to fire and a decision by high authority to fire. "We can now see that the Soviet decision in May-June had two important elements: one was emplacing Soviet nuclear missiles [with warheads], the other was deploying...Soviet combat troops, in all numbering some 42,000 men by mid-October." 18

Khrushchev motives

In his chapter on "The Soviet Decision," p. 21, G says: "Among American analysts there has been a consensus that the principal reason for the Soviet decision to deploy medium-range nuclear missiles in Cuba was to redress the publicly revealed serious imbalance in the strategic nuclear balance." (my italics; note that the "public revelation" was the Gilpatric speech proposed and drafted by me).

The desire "to deter an American attack on Cuba...was a factor, but a supplementary and secondary reason for desiring the missile deployment." (p. 22).

In his earlier edition (1987, written prior to the Cambridge conference) G said "There is a general consensus that the principal motivation was to redress...the strategic nuclear balance"; and this still seems to be true for the analysts in question, including Garthoff, since he still follows this sentence with the statement: "No other explanation satisfactorily accounts for the action." (my ital)

The fact is--as can be seen quite adequately in Garthoff's own account--that Khrushchev's quite different explanation, reversing the order of emphasis for these two reasons, accounts for the action perfectly well. In his memoirs, Khrushchev mentions the reason stressed by American analysts, redressing the "balance of power," but emphatically and repeatedly cites as the principal reason his desire to avert a Soviet "loss of Cuba" to American invasion.

The contrast appears more sharply in the earliest accounts. In his speech of December 1962, Khrushchev gave the defense of Cuba as the only reason for the deployment. American analysts, on the other hand, mostly gave this reason no real role in the decision, which they attributed entirely to reasons relating to the strategic balance and Khrushchev's ambitions in Europe and worldwide.

Garthoff is now acknowledging that what Khrushchev eventually described as his main reason was "a factor," after all. But why is he still insisting that it was only "supplementary and secondary"

and that an explanation giving it, say, equal importance, or primary weight, or even an exclusive role, cannot satisfactorily explain the action?

My point here is not to settle this question, or even to take a position on it, but to draw attention to the extreme reluctance of even Garthoff--a man I would call the most objective, best-informed, perceptive and honest of the ex-official analysts--to learn from the Soviets--i.e., to learn that he and others had been mistaken--on this particular point of Soviet motives.

On the evidence available, it is simply not true to say that no other explanation than one which assigns principal importance to the strategic balance can satisfactorily account for the decision. So why does even Garthoff still say it?

No one has ever defended Khrushchev's December 1962 claim (earlier made in his private letters to Kennedy) that defending Cuba was the only incentive; that is not really an issue. But why, and on what logical or evidential basis, still resist so sharply the judgments of all the Soviets who differ among themselves only as to whether that motive was the most important, or equally important, or nearly as important, compared to the goal of approaching a parity with US strategic forces?

The answer is, I would say, that there is no logical or evidential basis for doing so--either for dismissing all or any of these judgements or, from an American perspective, for choosing among them. I believe that the explanation for the continued insistence by Garthoff and other American analysts that Khrushchev's concern about American invasion cannot have played a major determining, causal role in Soviet decisionmaking must be found elsewhere.

It must be sought in their reluctance to admit how mistaken they themselves were earlier, and for how long, and why: how ignorant they were not only of the Soviet perspective and reasoning, but of American covert operations and planning; how much they were lied to and misled by American officials--for some of them, their own superiors--and how credulous they were.

Indeed, Garthoff is, so far, almost uniquely candid in acknowledging in his new edition (dated May 1989) his own previous underestimation of the realistic basis for Soviet expectations of

invasion. But he does this, oddly, in the following chapter, on "The US Decision" (pp. 50-52), without allowing the striking new information on US contingency planning for invasion to modify the judgements on relative Soviet motives that he repeats from 1987 in the first chapter.

His new account (p. 50) starts as before: "Contrary to Soviet and Cuban claims, no US plan for an invasion of Cuba was under way."

His 1987 version continued: "Contingency plans existed, but not a plan that had been adopted." (In the 1987, on the first page after the Introduction, p. 5, is the statement, omitted in the second edition: "No doubt a military contingency "plan" was on file (the United States in 1941 even had a "war plan" for conflict with Great Britain), but there was no political decision or intention to invade Cuba before October 1962.")

This mirrors, almost word for word, statements by McNamara and Bundy in the Cambridge conference, October 1987, responding to the Soviet perspective, prior to the release of documents, described below, revealing the character of the planning they themselves had directed.)

In 1989 Garthoff omits the sentence above and continues instead: "Nonetheless, while those who have most stressed the fact that the United States had not made a decision to attack Cuba are correct, they have sometimes leaned too far toward dismissing the relevance of this contingency planning to the history of the times."

His footnote to this sentence reads, creditably: "Robert McNamara, at the Cambridge and Moscow conferences, is one; this author, in the first edition of this book, was guilty of the same error. McNamara accepts that US actions probably looked very threatening to the Cubans and Soviets, but I am addressing also the point that under some circumstances, never clearly established, the United States might have attacked Cuba [i.e., in the absence of Soviet missiles]." (p. 50)

He proceeds to describe the planning revealed in documents declassified in 1987 by request of James Hershberg and analysed in Hershberg's "Before the Missiles of October," published in the Boston Phoenix (because he couldn't get his article published elsewhere) in April 8, 1988 (with a longer article coming soon in Diplomatic History).

> Just what is the relevance of this contingency planning--extraordinary in its time-urgency and high-level direction--to the history of our times? I disagree with Garthoff's judgment that Hershberg's "most thorough research" nevertheless "overdraws conclusions on the extent of the US inclination to attack Cuba prior to discovery of the missiles." (51)

Garthoff, it seems to me, fails to relate the exercises and invasion planning, and in particular the circumstances postulated by McNamara that might trigger a decision to invade, to the aims, timetable and concrete activities of the Mongoose program (see below, and note the comments to Hershberg by Sam Wilson and Admiral Anderson on this point, which G does not cite), nor does he relate either of these to the timing of and pressures arising in the election campaign.

Nevertheless, he suggests the significance of the new data by a change in the following sentence which appeared in 1987 on the first page after the Introduction: "It was not unreasonable for Castro and the Soviet government to be concerned over the possibility of intensified US hostile action against Cuba in 1962." In the 1989 edition, this sentence continues with the new clause (p. 9): "including the possibility of invasion."

If US invasion was a reasonable, realistic concern, was the Soviet response "unreasonable"? Certainly it was legal (as the Counsellor to the State Department pointed out). Was it possibly effective? McNamara's immediate reaction, in the transcripts, indicates that it was; he asserted that their presence, potentially operational, virtually precluded US attack, hence invasion.

Moreover, it was essentially identical to the American strategy for deterring a threat of invasion of Europe: a threat far less immediate or realistic. Not only were the equivalent American missiles in Turkey--closer to the Soviet Union than Cuba was to the US--serving the same purpose, according to American claims, but so were all the nuclear or dual-purpose short-range missiles and artillery and tactical aircraft in Western Europe: then and now! (See the discussion in my recent Grant Proposal, July 1989 And compare the movement of B-29s to England in connection with the first Berlin crisis, the Berlin blockade in 1948; see Herken).

To say this is not necessarily to justify Khrushchev's choice,

from a perspective that is also critical of the US first-use policy and deployments in Europe and Turkey. As a long-term defense approach, Khrushchev's deployment was no less reckless--I would say irresponsible and dangerous--than US and NATO policy. But by the same token, it was not less legitimate.

If it was more risky in the short-run--and it was--that was because of the possibility that the US would attempt to prevent the deployment by illegal and aggressive means: by blockade, attack or invasion. If this consideration undercuts the legitimacy of Khrushchev's action--by focussing on its dangers as a "provocation" of US aggression--it does the same, more sharply, for the US response.

(Foreseeable claims that the illegality of US actions was negated by a "supreme national emergency," a compelling threat to US national security, were false, consciously deceptive and invalid. Khrushchev's secrecy and misleading statements, though legal, lent credence to these claims; but they did not lead the President or Secretary of Defense, privately, to perceive the deployment as constituting a military threat to US security that justified a military response).

Here is sufficient reason for the Soviet explanation to be omitted from US official arguments at the time and now.

i.e. SU response was legit, reasonable, effective.

[continued: but what of their private understanding then? Note G's ignorance of this explanation at the time, as an advisor and analyst; and his continued ignorance 25 and more years later. See risks of operating with such ignorance among intelligence analysts, and of perpetuating it. And difficulty even for a Garthoff to reconsider adequately. Bearing of this on US motives, and risk-taking; and illegality and aggressiveness at the time] (see G p. 45) (and see Blight quotes on perplexity in 1987: true?! or still false?!)

--22. no Su commentator has put strategic balance as principal motive; see discussion on 22=23-24; lack of basis for G judgment.

--also see "third motive, " 24: move toward parity.

NOTES: (August 11)

--22. Did Khrushchev think JFK was weak-willed? G has shifted his opinion from saying that this has been thoroughly debunked to saying it is "questionable." cites Burlatsky on Andropov. But see comments in Blight book on alternative SU reading on JFK!

--22. [consider possibility that SU saw outcome, with no invasion pledge, as considerable victory. While JCS saw it as a cause for ...coup, assassination... (along with Diem, next year...move to test ban...)]

--reasons for, and effects of secrecy. reasons for Castro desire for publicity. Effects on ability of US to prepare and achieve a FA!

--defensive vs. offensive weapons: see low file, notes today. Did SU think they were not deceiving provocatively, lying? Effect on JFK's feelings: insult, humiliation (see defs). Violence as counter. ("Must do more than diplomatic.")

--A comparison of Garthoff's 1987 and 1989 editions bears on some interesting questions, which could also be put to G directly:

(a) What did Garthoff not know--as an intelligence analyst --in 1962?

Why was this? To what extent was information (about American activities and plans) withheld from him, or lied about by his superiors?

To what extent was he misled--at the time, and perhaps later-- by official American statements?

Why did he not guess some of these matters?

What was the role of preconceptions about the Soviets? About the US?

[Note: Garthoff is one of the very least ideologically constrained of official intelligence analysts and Soviet specialists, the most open to non-ominous, non-"worst case" interpretations of Soviet behavior. Yet to be a government official and trusted intelligence analyst at all, for so long, he has had to share at least some Cold War assumptions, some "sacred beliefs," including false ones. A good guess would be that these relate, in particular, to his perception of US intentions, aims and activities.

Thus, his mistakes may come less from his willingness to impute non-malevolent motives to the Soviets and to find bureaucratic explanations for their behavior, than from a comparable tendency to over-emphasize benign, non-aggressive, motives and plans in the US Government, and to put undue trust in official statements, especially made privately to him.

As an intelligence analyst, he might or might not have a clear picture of the scope--and secrecy--of covert operations and of secret military planning. He might have put too much evidential weight on his own lack of knowledge of MongOOSE (?) or of invasion planning, along with official statements that we did not intend to attack.

Such inferences would also apply to JFK School analysts, and to RAND. In the same way that Garthoff may have been misled about

invasion plans and Mongoose, I was misled about the US role in Indonesia in 1965, in part by private assurances by William Bundy; and about the US role in Cuba in 1961-62, partly by Lansdale's total silence to me about Mongoose.

Such "naivete," ignorance and bias concerning US behavior--almost a prerequisite for a trusted staff career in the national security apparatus, as well as a prerequisite for wanting to enter or persist in such a career--would strongly bias and limit his ability to interpret realistically Soviet behavior, when they are responding to perceptions of US actions or intent that a good Cold Warrior could not imagine or take seriously (as their "real beliefs").]

(b) What did Garthoff still not know in 1987? Why?

See questions above.

(c) What does Garthoff still not know, or consider, or conjecture, in 1989?

(d) What was the impact on his intelligence predictions and analyses, his understanding of the crisis and interpretations of Soviet behavior and concerns, of his lack of knowledge?

Were those he advised aware of this impact? How would they allow for it in using his analyses--or those of others in a similar position? Were they aware of a "price" they were paying--in reliable, relevant analysis from experts--by keeping those experts in the dark? Did they consider informing him?

Thus, Garthoff and apparently virtually all others in the intelligence community, in ignoring the reality of Soviet warnings about possible invasion of Cuba, failed even to consider that as a deterrent to such invasion the Soviets might be putting in sizeable combat contingents and Soviet-manned equipment.

Thus they seriously underestimated the actual Soviet combat presence in Cuba, on the eve of possible US invasion! On October 22, with invasion possibly a week away, the estimate was 8-10,000. The actual figure was 42,000 troops--with more coming, if the blockade had not interfered.

Earlier in his text, Garthoff adds in 1989 the point that

"Deterrence of an American attack on Cuba, and reassurance of the Cubans, were, however, clearly the only reasons for deploying the Soviet air defense and coastal defense forces." Oddly, he does not mention in this connection the large Soviet troops commitment, nor the Il-28s, aimed at attacking an invasion force.

The whole section on the Soviet combat troops, pp. 34-36, is new in the 1989 edition, as is the description on p. 18 and the statement: "We can now see that the Soviet decision in May-June had two important elements: one was emplacing Soviet nuclear missiles, the other was deploying a substantial contingent of conventionally armed Soviet combat troops, in all numbering some 42,000 men by mid-October." *Two issues!*

Yet none of this affects the judgment on the next page, in his sentence just preceding the sentence above on the reasons for deploying air defense and coastal defense, which retains the judgment of the 1987 edition: deterring an American invasion "was a factor, but a supplementary and secondary reason for desiring the missile deployment."

Note the reluctance to accept, still, in 1989, that both elements of the dual decision in May-June were directly related to the purpose of deterring American invasion: as the Soviets have always said.

Notice that in order to ignore Soviet concern about American invasion as a real and primary motivation--with immediate consequences for the underestimation of the Soviet combat forces accompanying the missiles, during and after the crisis--US official and scholarly analysts have had to ignore or totally discount nearly everything Soviet officials said publicly and privately about their motivation before, during and after the crisis!

The role of ideology in warping intelligence analyses and interpretation of evidence--not only ideology about the opponent but about one's own country, and the purposes, openness and veracity of one's own leaders--could hardly be clearer.

Even in 1989 Garthoff repeats his 1987 put-down of the Soviet statements. "The explanation for the deployment subsequently given by the Soviets--to deter an American attack on Cuba--was not only convenient but virtually necessary once the crisis had been resolved by withdrawing the missiles in exchange for an American pledge not

September; thereafter 'the danger will be over.'" (p. 26).

But if an invasion seemed to the Cubans possible before September, it would end in later September only if the arrival of the missiles by then had been announced, or otherwise made known to the Americans! And even then, that might have seemed more a provocation than a deterrent unless the missiles looked at least possibly operational, which could not be till later.

This is a new question: for me, and for the subject, so far as I am aware. The implications and questions posed by the new premise that a primary motivation of the Soviets was to deter invasion are just beginning to emerge, for me along with others!

If it were not for the fact that the coastal defenses and large numbers of Soviet troops were clearly for no other purpose than deterring or repelling invasion, this matter of timing and secrecy might almost seem to reject the new premise. As it is, the best guess would seem to be that there was a major incoherence in the Soviet program; they were acting as if there was no real threat of an American invasion before the election, when their earlier, well-justified concerns had offered them no such assurance, and their very program of military aid to Cuba was increasing the likelihood of an American invasion sooner rather than later.

Another possibility was that they were taking a tense gamble which they saw as unavoidable; they were moving as fast as they could, taking a conscious chance that it would not be fast enough and that their own efforts might be self-defeating by speeding the American timetable; and they saw secrecy as essential, because otherwise a blockade was probable, or even worse, this news would tip the scales toward an immediate invasion which was almost certain anyway.

But in that case, September and early October should have been a time of intense apprehension in Moscow. Whereas all the information from the Soviets so far is that the Soviets were increasingly assured, by Kennedy's inaction and assurances to the public, that their missiles had not been detected, or else that they were being accepted.

But if they were really anticipating at least the possibility, let alone a high likelihood, of a surprise American invasion--executed as a fait accompli--in the absence of the missiles, this absence of reaction to the actual presence of the missiles

themselves should not have been so reassuring.

✓ It could well have meant that events were moving toward the worst possible eventuality: an American invasion of Cuba in ignorance that American troops were about to be encountering major Soviet forces and capturing SS-4 and SS-5 missiles whose presence had apparently just been denied by the Soviets. The latter discovery would be a propaganda boon for the Americans--apparently more than justifying their invasion--while the former encounter would be a catastrophe for everyone, possibly everyone in the Northern Hemisphere.

We still don't know especially since McNamara and McGeorge Bundy are still lying about these preparations--the real state of mind and motives that led to the urgent contingency planning for invasion on October 1, 1962, with a target date of October 20. But they certainly are consistent with a solid likelihood of just this course of events.

7! Were the Soviets planning to reveal the missiles earlier than otherwise if they detected any immediate indications of American invasion? In that case, the large-scale exercises practicing the overthrow of "Ortsac" (Castro spelled backwards)--a detail that was released in an authorised leak on October 22 (p. 60)--should have given them enough concern to trigger this announcement! After all, these maneuvers were actually used to cover the preparations for possible invasion in October directed by the President!

Another alarming signal should have been the movements during the week of October 15-22, which tipped off various reporters to an approaching crisis, probably on Cuba. Yet by all accounts, the Soviets were caught thoroughly by surprise on October 22. This surprise just does not seem consistent with a high level of apprehension of American invasion in the absence of a sharply increased Soviet commitment: which the Soviets had so far taken great pains to conceal.

Is it possible that Kennedy's resistance to Republican pressures to blockade or invade had actually allayed Soviet expectations of a near-term invasion, or one before the election, by August or September? That is, perhaps by the time the missiles actually went in, the Soviets were no longer as convinced of the immediate need for them, for deterrence, as they were when the decision was made in May and June. They could nevertheless have

WHY? Benin?

continued the deployment, for other motives and because of a long-term threat to Cuba, as well as because of inertia. (Ask the Soviets).

Another explanation could be my speculative conclusion of 1962: that Khrushchev had gotten it into his head that Kennedy would be very reluctant to see any great controversy erupt before the election. I thought he applied this to Kennedy's preference to conceal his awareness of the missiles, if he detected them before the election. (This could still be true, for Khrushchev; and he could have been right, especially if the missiles had been detected later than they were). But it would also apply to invasion.

Khrushchev might have gotten it into his head--quite inappropriately (judging by the contingency planning actually going on, as well as by what actually happened!)--that there was almost no chance of an invasion before the election.

This hypothesis is supported by Walt Rostow's observation to the President, after the crisis, that he believed Khrushchev had been very impressed, and misled, by what he saw as the disruption of policymaking before an election when he witnessed events during his visit to the UN in 1960 (?). Rostow thought he might have missed, in 1962, the difference between a Presidential and a Congressional election, and in any case have exaggerated the passivity of the decision apparatus during such an event.

In any case, these speculations not only bear on possible unrealism or incoherence in Soviet decisionmaking on the project, but on the very real possibility that it was heading toward a disaster that has scarcely been measured in past analysis. An American invasion--which was significantly more likely than past analysts have realized even in the absence or in ignorance of Soviet missiles--might not only have been undeterred by the actual, secret presence of the missiles and the Soviet troops, but might have been made triggered by the known buildup accompanying the missile and troops, and brought the US into immediate, large-scale ground combat with Soviet forces. All this because the Soviets, trying to deter such an invasion, had inserted missiles and forces but without yet revealing it!

*not just obligation!
+ test was*

The situation would be like that in the movie Dr. Strangelove when the Soviet Ambassador reveals that the single, out-of-control (and by now out of communication) American strategic bomber--acting

with the initiative and lack of feedback of whoever it was who ordered the firing of the Soviet SAM against Major Anderson's U-2 on October 26--was about to trigger a Soviet Doomsday Machine that had been wired automatically to end all life on earth with a cloud of radioactive cobalt when any nuclear explosions went off on the Soviet Union.

Dr. Strangelove points out that if this were meant, as it was, to deter American attack, why had not the Americans been told? A secret device could not deter, it could only do...what was about to happen. The Ambassador explains that the Soviet premier had been planning to reveal the device shortly, at a visit to the UN.

(The movie, I believe, was produced before the Cuban Missile Crisis; it was released afterwards. The parallel has never been noted before).

?

Note that Garthoff describes the intended function of the large Soviet troop contingent as being, in addition to security for the missile sites and other forces, "a 'trip wire' in case of a large U.S. attack." The term is surely meant to suggest an analogy to the US forces in Europe, which serve as a tripwire to American nuclear response.

In this case (did the Soviets themselves use this term?) it might also refer to assuring Soviet commitment and response elsewhere if necessary. But such responses would quickly encounter American tripwires to nuclear war.

The troops alone, if inserted secretly and then revealed, would have been a major deterrent to US invasion, though not quite certain. Combined with missiles, they do add force to the possibility that American invasion would lead to a launch, authorised or not.

As with the above question of what the Soviet concerns were or should have been with respect to the effect of their secrecy, comparable issues are raised by their deployment of actual warheads to Cuba. Given that their actual presence or absence could not be reliably known by the Americans, hence could not affect deterrence, the conceivable advantage of having warheads there (in case Khrushchev actually desired a first strike in some circumstances!) would seem to have been enormously outweighed by the disadvantage, in case of an unauthorised firing or possible detonation of one of these warheads.

At the Cambridge Conference in 1987, both some Soviets (e.g., Burlatsky) and Americans (Schelling?) found it inconceivable, on "rational" grounds, that the warheads could actually have been deployed, so far from Soviet territory. And on the basis of available evidence, Garthoff asserted in 1987 that The nuclear warheads, it later became clear, [?] almost certainly had not yet arrived, but were to be provided." (p. 20).

Yet in 1989, General Volkongonov's detailed assurances finally persuaded Garthoff reluctantly to believe that ~~twenty~~ nuclear warheads had probably arrived. (No testimony is offered from the Soviets as to why they were sent.) So McNamara's--and CIA's--"prudent assumption" that the missiles were capable of being fired was not misplaced (although the warheads may not have been at the missile launching pads, yet, or routinely).

The "rational actor" model, in the economist's technical and limited sense of "rational," is working better and better for the crisis; but the "reasonable and prudent leader" model, a part of the ideologies of both sides, not so well.

WHAT?!
NO On the other hand, Volkogonov (p. 38n, 1989) confirmed that there were no nuclear warheads with, or intended for, the dual-capable short-range FROG rockets which accompanied the Soviet troops. Good planning. Except that (as Garthoff fails to note) the presence of these rockets led the American JCS to plan "prudently" for the possibility that the Soviet troops did have tactical nuclear weapons.

1. Their idea of a prudent response to this possibility was to plan to have tactical nuclear weapons with the American troops that--they hoped and expected, as of this discussion on October 27--would be invading within a day or two. (See my notes of the JCS meeting, October 27) Bundy, admitting that he did not know of this at the time, expresses confidence that some civilian would have caught this before the weapons went into Cuba (or anyway, before they were used). Did any Soviets foresee this "cost" of sending dual-capable weapons with their troops?

Notes starting on Chapter 3, The Confrontation

55. JFK "intentionally directed attention at Moscow, and ignored Castro and the Cuban role." G gives, and endorses, the reasons for not focussing threats and promises exclusively on Castro (in hopes of splitting him off from Moscow, or letting Moscow save face). But why was Castro "ignored"?

The US belief that Castro was simply a tool of Moscow was wrong, and led to wrong inferences at the climax of the crisis; it might have led to an air attack and everything that might have followed.

G reports in the previous chapter the unanimous opinion--as he understood it--that deterrence of invasion was not a primary motive, indeed, was not among the real motives of the deployment. But could those knowledgeable about Mongoose and the invasion planning--evidently not including Garthoff--really have been so dismissive of this explanation: which was, after all, what the Soviets had been and were still saying?

Was not this tactic of ignoring Castro, then, part of a strategy of distracting attention from the foreseeable Soviet and Cuban justification of the missiles: that they were a defensive move against aggressive operations and intentions? What JFK was doing was "ignoring" this claim, "not dignifying it with any answer or recognition." G, and some of those on the ExComm, may not have realized this US motive.

55. What if the OAS had known of Mongoose and the invasion plans? Whatever their private views, they could hardly have been so supportive publicly as they were! Thus US secrecy and lies on these precursors were critical to establishing a "legal" basis for the blockade and threats.

Suggestion

55. On Facts Accomplis. "...the Soviet failure until October 28 to acknowledge publicly the presence of its missiles in Cuba, counterposed to convincing American photographic evidence, weakened Soviet claims that it was a normal and justified action to station forces in the territory of a friendly state."

The Soviet secrecy and evasions on this cost them dearly, on and after October 22. They were put in the position of the US Government in 1960 when Khrushchev revealed that Powers had been

captured alive, after USG denials and lies about his U-2. Worse: the secrecy suggested not only an illegitimate activity--ironically, because their deployment was not illegitimate--but a probably aggressive one, supporting the US resolution in the OAS that the missiles were a "threat to the peace."

X Assuming that the Soviet principal motives were defensive, to deter attack on Cuba, the Soviet secrecy lent itself to being depicted as evidence of aggressive intentions. This was especially true when, instead of admitting and justifying the deployment, the Soviets continued to deny it, as if to say that the blockade might be justified if it were true that missiles were being deployed!

No one seems to have asked, or asked the Soviets, why they did this. They must, after October 22, have realized that they would have to reveal the missiles eventually: why the disastrous hesitation?

One guess would be that, once the Soviet Union had decided to do something secretly--which was hardly uncommon for them--they had no experience, reflexes, procedures for deciding to reveal that secret quickly, prior to the time they had earlier planned.

More recent examples would be their "public information handling" of the KAL-007 shootdown and of the Chernobyl disaster. In both of these persistent silence and evasions was very costly in terms of public opinion, which was being strongly manipulated by the US. Prior to Gorbachev, the instinct for secrecy in the Soviet Union was not counterbalanced, as in the US, by any tendencies toward, experience with, or procedures for managing timely candor, when appropriate.

But this may be a general risk of attempts at faits accomplis. If the other party discovers the project prematurely, the very fact that public attention has not been aroused may give it the option of keeping its own knowledge and initial planning and responses secret while it prepares its own fait accompli as a counter. (This is, of course, what happened in Cuba II).

And part of its counter may be to reveal, at a moment of its own choosing, the secret planning of the adversary, and to interpret the opponent's secrecy as indicating aggressive intent, and a guilty conscience over an illegitimate activity. The adversary may well find it difficult to explain away this interpretation. How often do states admit or explain why they chose the path of a fait accompli?

wb?

Thus, in this case, it would have been embarrassing for the Soviet Union to give what was probably the real explanation: "We were afraid that if we announced our plan openly [as the Cubans apparently urged] the Americans would confront us with a blockade. We didn't want to have to face that."

Yet without coming up with some explanation, and appearing unwilling to admit promptly even what they were doing, the Soviets had no counter to Kennedy's charge that "their sudden, clandestine decision to station strategic weapons for the first time outside of Soviet soil" was a "deliberately provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which cannot be accepted by this country," a "clandestine, reckless, and provocative threat to world peace..." (p. 58).

If JFK, on October 22, had not been able to say, over and over, "secret," "deceptive," and "clandestine," about the Soviet move, the facts that, first, the Soviets were "changing the status quo" in precisely the way the US had done in Turkey, and second, that the Soviet move was perfectly legal while the announced US blockade was either illegal or an act of war, would have been embarrassingly blatant.

Moreover, aside from the fact that, as Soviet officials later pointed out, the Soviet Union had no obligation to tell the US in advance of what it was doing, all this denunciation of clandestinity and deception was coming from the Administration that was at that moment carrying out covert raids against and penetrations into Cuba for purposes of sabotage, and attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro. out-16'

It had been doing this secretly for the last year and a half, ever since it had deceptively announced that it had "learned a lesson" from its clandestinely prepared and launched invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs! All of which--had it been known, which it wasn't (except to the Cubans and Soviets!)--not only provided a precedent for the secrecy surrounding the legal Soviet move, but which mocked the US charge that the Soviet effort at deterring a US invasion--which was also under clandestine preparation as an imminent option--was an "unjustified" change in the status quo.

That the Soviet move was "provocative" can hardly be questioned, given the US response. But exactly why, in what way,

was it provocative? The answer scarcely supports the self-righteous tone of the US complaint. Again, the Soviets were doing what the US had done in Turkey, and on the same basis of an ally's "request" (actually, in both cases, the ally's compliance).

The difference, from the US point of view, was that our neighbor Cuba was regarded as being within "our" hemisphere, our immediate sphere of influence, whereas the Soviets' neighbor Turkey was not to be regarded as within "their" hemisphere; in fact, it, too, was within our sphere of influence. That was the asymmetric "status quo" whose change we would not accept; and it was disingenuous to imply that we would have "accepted" the change in better spirit if it had not been accomplished suddenly and secretly.

The change was not merely a matter of deployment. It was above all a change in the balance of "superpower 'rights'", a change in the direction of asserted parity of status and rights. It meant a new assertion by the Soviet Union of an equal right to treat a friendly government in the shadow of the other superpower as a sovereign state and an ally, to be protected by the supply or emplacement of arms and forces.

see GPR and ERE Division SVN (MK?) This also, even more "provocatively," meant a change in the status quo--as the US continued to perceive it, even after the Castro-led revolution in Cuba--of the relation of Cuba to the US. It meant the assertion by Cuba of a parity of sovereign rights between the US and Cuba, which the US had never come to recognize and was secretly contradicting in its covert Mongoose program and its secret contingency planning for invasion.

To challenge a state's core sense of identity--in this case, the identity of the US as the hegemonic power in the hemisphere and especially in the Caribbean--is, of course, "provocative" and may be reckless (as it proved in this case). But the judgment by the heretofore hegemonic power that this assertion of autonomy is "unjustified" is not the last word. It was, primarily, the US' unwillingness to accept an assertion of diplomatic or sovereign parity with either the Soviet Union or Cuba that underlay the danger, recklessness and provocativeness of the Soviet-Cuban project.

It is also true that the way in which the Soviet Union carried out the operation turned out to be provocative, though hardly

"deliberately" so. The successful secrecy and deliberately misleading statements of intention inadvertently tempted Kennedy to make public assurances and commitments that he would probably not have made if he had been less certain and less mistaken about Soviet intentions.

The Soviets were either inattentive to or inconsiderate of the effects of this on Kennedy's domestic political embarrassment when his assurances and commitments were confronted with the reality of Soviet actions. Khrushchev certainly underrated the likelihood that this prospect would "provoke" Kennedy to take aggressive action to avert or avenge this embarrassment. Thus he underrated the danger of relying on secrecy to produce a surprise.

My general study of crises as "faits malaccomplis"--the result of attempted faits accomplis that were miscalculated or discovered prematurely--shows this pattern of inadvertent and unforeseen provocation as a frequent generator of crises in the relations of states.

C. Khrushchev
(Poland)

58. "The overt nuclear element of the confrontation was contained in Kennedy's declaration that 'it shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.'"

Several points may be made about this threat.

(1) It is a threat of massive escalation, meant to deter Soviet nuclear first-use--whether directed by Moscow or unauthorized--in response to a US invasion or air attack on Cuba. /

(2) By not mentioning the latter contingencies, and by referring to "any nation" as though nations other than the US were plausible targets for these MRBMs, Kennedy focussed attention, deceptively, on an aggressive threat posed by these missiles rather than any defensive, deterrent function. He also presented the US action as protecting other Latin American countries, further justification for his stance.

(3) This is not to say that the missiles deployed to Cuba posed no "offensive" Soviet threat. They did challenge US/NATO

arrangements--which relied on credible US first-use nuclear threats--to deter and defend against a Soviet challenge to the status of West Berlin, or West Europe in general. The Berlin issue was an aspect to the crisis which was certainly real in US minds and probably in Khrushchev's as well, though so far the Soviets have not acknowledged this.

The Cuban-based MRBMs did pose a threat of Soviet escalation to US first-use of nuclear weapons in the context of NATO attempts to break a possible Soviet blockade of Berlin. Thus, the deployment of MRBMs and IRBMs to Cuba did serve to neutralize the US first-use threats on which NATO relied to defend Berlin and West Europe.

Of course, if such an escalation was implemented, it would not be in the form of a single missile, or only a few missiles, being launched from Cuba, or the Soviet Union; and it would go without saying that a sizeable launch from anywhere would lead to full retaliation against the Soviet Union. So Kennedy's explicit threat was redundant in this context; it really applied much more to the contingency of Soviet first-use in response to US invasion or attack of Cuba.

(4) Nevertheless, McNamara, and according to him, the President, was far from fully confident that this massive deterrent threat would work, in the event of US attack on the missile or invasion. He reports that he estimated a small but highly significant probability that such an attack would lead to an unauthorized launch of one or more missiles, outside Moscow's control. This small probability was enough in McNamara's mind to deter him from recommending such an attack or invasion, as soon as he recognized a real possibility that some missiles were operational, which was by October 17 or so. Nov. 16 68

(5) Moreover, he reported at the Cambridge Conference in 1987 that he and the President, alert to the possibility of unauthorized launches of one or a few missiles, would almost certainly not have authorised a "full" retaliatory response on the Soviet Union; they might not have launched a nuclear response at all. So the threat in Kennedy's speech that such a full response would be "required," i.e., inevitable, was a conscious bluff.

(6) However, this deterrent threat of escalation--of "over-reaction"--was basically intended to strengthen the credibility of an offensive threat of non-nuclear action against the missiles and

other Soviet forces in Cuba, as well as against Castro's forces, by weakening the credibility of Soviet nuclear response to such a US non-nuclear attack.

It was also a reminder--to the same effect, and more generally--of continued US overwhelming nuclear superiority, as first asserted in the Gilpatric speech in October 1961 (which may have been a stimulus to the actual Soviet deployment). This reassertion of US first-strike superiority served to deter not only Soviet first-use from Cuba but Soviet "horizontal escalation," responding to US blockade or invasion by creating challenges elsewhere, as in Turkey or Berlin.

By thus hinting strongly that the US was prepared to act aggressively despite the possibility of such counter-moves (mentioned elsewhere in the speech), on the basis in part of its nuclear superiority (which permitted it to wield such a threat of "over-reaction"), this statement was, as Garthoff says, "a sign of American determination."

(7) Garthoff finds these threats "irrelevant to Moscow's calculations. It seems clear [in the 1987 edition, "I am sure"] that under no contingency did Soviet leadership contemplate actually firing its Cuban missiles, even if the warheads had been there."

(59) The Soviets at the 1989 Moscow conference all stated firmly that "the Soviet military command in Cuba had strict and clear instructions under no circumstances to prepare the missiles for firing, much less to fire them--in contrast to the instructions to Soviet air defense, coastal defense, and ground forces in Cuba, who were authorized to fight if Cuba were attacked."

*See movement of CM
toward Havana!*

However: (a) Even if US officials had felt certain that Soviet leaders had no intention of launching a deliberate attack, even against US invasion--and indeed, McNamara did feel confident of this--this US threat was not irrelevant to US concerns about possible Soviet unauthorized launch, and the efforts the Soviets might take to prevent this.

Even though the US threat of escalation did not eliminate the fear of unauthorized action in the minds of US leaders, it could be expected to encourage the Soviets to take greater precautions. And it may even have done this. When were these strict and clear instructions issued? Might they have been issued, or reiterated and strengthened, after the speech of October 22?

(b) Whenever they gave such instructions, precautions could always use strengthening. After all, a Soviet SAM was fired--against the wishes of and without instructions from Moscow--not when Cuba was being attacked, but when a U-2 was conducting high-altitude surveillance!

These considerations must be weighed in the light of the list of unauthorized actions during the crisis:

Unauthorized actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis

--According to General Keegan, "the SAC full-alert process was reported 'in the clear' rather than in normal encoded messages. Soviet communications interception personnel must have been shocked suddenly to hear the SAC commander-in-chief address all his senior commanders in an unprecedented message in the clear, stressing the seriousness of the situation faced by the nation, and assuring them that SAC plans were well prepared and were being executed smoothly. Soviet political and military leaders must have been puzzled and alarmed at this flaunting of the American strategic superiority, so great that the United States could afford to ignore normal operational security in order to drive home the extent of its power.

(Footnote: "In 1989 General Volkogonov told me that the initial Soviet reaction on hearing General Power's message in the clear was to wonder if it was a bluff, but that question was swiftly dispelled by observation of the SAC actions.")

"Equally extraordinary, and not known in Moscow, was that this remarkable display of American power was unauthorized by an unknown to the president, the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the Ex Comm as they so carefully calibrated and controlled action in the intensifying confrontation. The decision for this bold action was taken by General Thomas Power, commander-in-chief of SAC, on his own initiative. He had been ordered to go on full alert, and he did so. No one had told him how to do it, and he decided to "rub it in." Nor did he even inform higher authority after the fact...

--On this very same day, October 22, the Soviets arrested in Moscow the US and UK spy, their officer Colonel Oleg Penkovsky, presumably hoping to find out what he might have transmitted about the missile deployment. One of the key CIA officers directly managing the Penkovsky case told Garthoff that Penkovsky had been

given a few coded telephone messages for use in emergencies, including one to be used if he were about to be arrested, and also "one to be used in the ultimate contingency: imminent war. When he was being arrested, at his apartment, he had time to send a telephonic signal, but chose to use the signal for an imminent Soviet attack!"

?
on, later
(268)

Earlier, "He had tried to egg the Western powers on to more aggressive actions against the Soviet Union during the Berlin crisis in 1961. So when he was about to go down, he evidently decided to play Samson and bring the temple down on everyone else as well. Normally, such an attempt would have been feckless. But October 22/23, 1962, was not a normal day. Fortunately, his Western intelligence handlers, at the operational level, after weighing a dilemma of great responsibility, decided not to credit Penkovsky's final signal and suppressed it. Not even the higher reaches of the CIA were informed of Penkovsky's provocative farewell." (pp. 64-65).

[Note that the decision not merely to disbelieve but to suppress Penkovsky's warning signal was also an "initiative" at low, operational levels, amounting to an "unauthorized action." It would have been just as easy for them to decide to "believe" it, and forward it urgently with this evaluation.]

It was not, after all, a miraculous coincidence that such a false warning--perhaps unprecedented in our "human intelligence" program, in which Penkovsky was our highest sources--should come exactly at the outset of a major crisis, when it was most likely to be believed and to be acted on preemptively.

The adversary's high-level alert, accompanying threats at the onset of an intense crisis, is likely to trigger a round-up of suspected enemy agents. For example, the warnings of imminent attack just before the Bay of Pigs invasion led Castro to roll up all the American networks the Cubans had had under surveillance up to that time.

And the American strategic alert was not only meant to be visible, but Power's unauthorized action made it even more blatant, immediately credible, and threatening. (This fact, known to SAC though not to the President or JCS, would have made Penkovsky's signal all the more credible to Power himself, if he had known of it: as surely, he "should" have!)

It is precisely at that moment, a round-up of agents (Penkovsky may have been the only one in this case--was he?--but in another case there might be more) at the onset of a strategic crisis, that one or more of those about to be arrested and perhaps tortured and killed might choose, like Penkovsky, to send a "Samson-like" message.

Yet another ominous "coincidence-waiting-to-happen" was a possible nuclear accident coming on this same day, or on subsequent days. SAC's DEFCON 2 was an unprecedented alert, meaning that throughout the world at SAC bases nuclear weapons were being loaded onto planes and deployed on an unprecedented scale, with unprecedented urgency.

1961
1962 In particular, more planes were being put on continuous air alert than ever before. Both of these facts, the general readying and the airborne alert, meant that the chance of an accident involving a nuclear weapon--either with high-explosive yield, partial nuclear explosion or full nuclear explosion--was higher than "normal," perhaps higher than ever before. (The previous airborne alert, with fewer planes, had already involved a number of collisions and aircraft failures of nuclear-armed planes, some involving the accidental drop of nuclear weapons). Indeed, the increased chance of this was such as to make the sending of such a strong "signal" very questionable in terms of its dangers of accident.

This was especially true of the decision to relocate B-47s to thirty-three civilian airports, such as Boston. (61) I felt at the time that this was a reckless policy (as was the airborne alert), risking nuclear accidents (including the spreading of radioactive plutonium from a high-explosive detonation) in the immediate vicinity of metropolitan areas. The risk seemed far from justifiable in view of the vastly inferior Soviet first-strike forces (from one to several dozen operational missiles in the Soviet Union and less than two hundred intercontinental bombers) which made a Soviet first-strike seem (to me) extremely unlikely.

Yet these same measures--other than the relocation of B-47s--could have seemed to the Soviets preparations for a US preemptive attack. Knowing that, NORAD and SAC would have been especially sensitive to indications of Soviet attack and hair-trigger prone to preempt it. (Precisely in view of this fact, the Soviets chose not to put their own strategic forces on enhanced alert).

In that situation, Penkovsky's "unauthorized action," or an accidental nuclear explosion at a SAC base, a major US city now hosting nuclear-armed B-47s, or a tactical air base (also on high alert)--both of which had been made more likely just at that time by the US alert itself--could easily have touched off a launch or even execute order to US strategic and tactical nuclear forces.

--Likewise, it was no accident that the Soviet unauthorized action launching a SAM at Major Anderson's U-2, and the Cuban antiaircraft firing--unauthorized by Moscow--at low-altitude reconnaissance planes both came at the very height of the crisis, October 26. Certainly the Cuban firing, and probably the firing of the SAM, was stimulated precisely by the expectation of imminent US attack: which either or both of these could have triggered.

It is just at the time of high tension and alert, when an unauthorized action is most dangerous, that such an action is also most likely, despite heightened precautions.

--The same day, a SAC U-2 flew "mistakenly" over the northern USSR, causing Soviet fighters to scramble in pursuit, in the same area where the KAL-007 was shot down in 1983. This might or might not have been an accident unrelated to the high tension. Some civilians at the time, as well as later, suspected that it might have represented SAC initiative on the order of Power's earlier decision to send a message in the clear (which was unknown at the time, but would not have been surprising to these civilians, including me).

--The incident of the nuclear-armed fighter launched toward Cuba, reported by the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

--The dispute between McNamara and Admiral Anderson over the control of naval blockade actions.

--68-69: Navy plans to intercept the Poltava, with a cargo of missiles and nuclear warheads, outside the quarantine line?

* --Navy antisubmarine warfare: forcing subs to the surface with depth charges, damaging one sub. 69

--"Several days into the crisis, a member of the ExComm in his other duties by chance became aware of another routine (sic) ongoing operation that should have been reconsidered under crisis

conditions. A US intelligence-collection ship [= the deSoto patrol in the Tonkin Gulf, 1964!] for intercepting communications was perilously close to Cuban waters. [read, inside?] No one [Come on!] had remembered it until then; it was promptly ordered to move a safe distance away. No incident occurred." p. 70.

WOW! (I just read this, on the afternoon of August 18, 1989). Garthoff cites this simply as an example of what could have happened--i.e., a Cuban attack on the vessel--inadvertently, from operations below the attention of most high-level decisionmakers, like the aggressive antisubmarine tactics of the Navy.

But is it clear that a resulting "incident" would have been unintended in either case? Given the military desire to attack Cuba, might not such operations during the crisis have been deliberately provocative? (Whether with or without the knowledge of the President or Secretary of Defense).

Garthoff observes, "There is a strong tendency to ignore lessons from near-misses; in 1967 a similar ship in a similar situation, the Liberty, was attacked by Israeli aircraft and ships, and in 1968 its sister-ship, the Pueblo, was captured by the North Koreans."

Astoundingly, Garthoff makes no reference in this passage (or elsewhere) to the de Soto patrol in the Tonkin Gulf! Or to the 34A missions--sabotage missions against North Vietnam--which helped trigger the attack on the de Soto patrol destroyer on August 2, 1964. Or, in this connection, to the exactly comparable Mongoose operations!

Barely, Oct 16 → sabotage? → "sink the main"!

The other examples he mentions were probably not cases of deliberate US provocation. But then, we were not making urgent contingency plans for invasion of Israel or Egypt or North Korea; and we weren't running (so far as I know) covert operations against the shoreline in either case!

The intelligence ship was probably emplaced near or in Cuban waters before October 15, the discovery of the missiles--hence its description as "routine"--either, or probably both, as part of the contingency preparations for blockade or invasion launched on October 1, and in combination with Mongoose operations against Cuba during that period.

"On October 4"--i.e., three days after the President directed urgent contingency planning for invasion, two days after McNamara listed six contingencies under which we might invade, one of which was "an attack against the Guantanamo Naval Base or against US planes or vessels outside Cuban territorial air space or waters" (p. 51)--"a meeting of the Special Group (Augmented) saw an argument between CIA Director John A. McCone and Robert Kennedy over why the program was going so slowly, which led to a decision to step up operations including the dispatch of sabotage teams into Cuba. At least three meetings, followed, including one on October 16 in between the two meetings in the White House that day on the missiles in Cuba." (p.32)

[It would be interesting to compare (CHECK THIS) the membership of the Special Group (Augmented) with the clearance list for PSAIM and ELITE and the membership of the Ex Comm.] The Mongoose operation "came to involve 400 Americans, about 2000 Cubans, a private navy of fast boats, and an annual budget of about \$50 million. [I'll bet the fast boats were the same Norwegian "Swift" boats that were used two years later for the 34A covert operations against North Vietnam].

Admiral Anderson himself has told James Hershberg that he understood the Mongoose operations to be aimed at provoking a Cuban military response that would justify and trigger a US invasion! (Now I can pretty well guess what Cuban response he would have had in mind!)

General Sam Wilson (later my colleague in pacification in Vietnam, still later head of Defense Intelligence Agency, at the time working under Ed Lansdale in the Pentagon on covert operations) told Hershberg the same.

The "best possible" Cuban response for this purpose would have been a Cuban attack on US forces: either Guantanamo, or a US Navy ship "on routine patrol." This particular patrol was offshore just prior to the deadline for maximum readiness for an invasion, October 20; it was almost certainly undertaking aggressive passes toward the shoreline to force the Cubans to turn on their coastal defense radars. (It didn't just happen to be "perilously close" to Cuban waters).

Moreover, it was almost certainly coordinated with Mongoose

raids one way or another, probably to pick up emissions stimulated by these sabotage missions, which had been stepped up by Robert Kennedy's order on October 16.

When I recently read, in my own notes, McNamara's October 2 list of possible justifications for implementing the contingency invasion or attack plans--I seem to have the only copy of this, with dateline attached--I might have wondered just how far Cuban forces would have to go to attack US vessels "outside Cuban waters." I have just read the answer: maybe 10 yards, maybe less.

How might an invasion--or at least, a major attack on Cuba, destroying at least some of the Soviet materiel that the Republicans were so concerned about--have been justified and triggered just before the election? The stage was set for an exact preplay of the Tonkin Gulf incidents of August 1964: which took place, two months before an election, under the exact same cast of American players, minus President Kennedy.

The possibility, at least, was being prepared for an American "response" to an "unprovoked attack on a routine patrol" (as the August 2 attack on the de Soto patrol destroyer was described). "Routine patrol" because the intelligence ship's true mission and operations would have remained secret and lied about, as long occurred after 1964. "Unprovoked" because American control of the covert naval raids against Cuba--which would have been linked with the Navy ship in Cuban minds and in reality, as in the Tonkin Gulf--remained secret for 13 years, as did American control of the 34A raids for seven years, till release of the Pentagon Papers.

One can even infer some of the specific targets of this "response." As in the Tonkin Gulf, the "logical" targets for "reprisal" would be targets "related" to the attack on the Navy ship; in 1964, these included the naval bases for North Vietnamese patrol boats, and petroleum depots.

On October 1, 1962, "two weeks before

The notion that events were moving toward a crisis before the discovery of the missiles and before the election, has just taken a great leap forward in my mind. (Even if the Tonkin Gulf scenario was not in the minds of the Kennedys, Lansdale or McNamara, and even if the presence of the de Soto patrol was not consciously intended--by them--to provoke attack, it might still have done so, as in 1964).

[The point immediately following was written before learning of this last point, about the intelligence ship, and does not reflect it: though it is scarcely weakened by it!]

McGeorge Bundy bases his fundamentally reassuring appraisal of the past, and future, risks of nuclear war on the record that leaders of both superpowers have been prudent, determined to maintain control of nuclear initiatives in their own hands, and very reluctant to decide on any combat employment of nuclear weapons. This means to him that virtually the only risk of nuclear operations reflected the possibility of accident or unauthorized action, which he rated as low.

As the record of the Cuban Missile Crisis alone shows, the risk of accident or unauthorized action was, perhaps, low, but not all that low. The likelihood that one accident or unauthorized action would lead to others was not low at all.

And the record shows that although the President and Secretary of Defense did not seem to underrate the likelihood of accident, unauthorized action or more generally, loss of their control of events, they nevertheless "accepted" what they saw as significantly high probabilities of such events in deciding to undertake belligerent actions--like the blockade, antisubmarine action, low-level reconnaissance--and to prolong the crisis.

Moreover, they did this in preference to settling the crisis on terms they personally judged to be compatible with US national security interests. And the same was true for Khrushchev, for at least some period after he became fully aware of the risks of the course he was on.

The net effect is less reassuring about the overall risks of nuclear war than Bundy makes it out.

Garthoff notes (58) that the President asserted the very presence of the Soviet missiles--imposing such risks for the Cuban people--demonstrated that the Cubans' leaders were "puppets and agents of an international conspiracy which has turned Cuba against your friends and neighbors in the Americas--and turned it into the first Latin American country to become a target for nuclear war--the first Latin American country to have these weapons on its soil" and that Cuban lives and land were "being used as pawns..."

Could not the same inference be made, on the same basis, by the people of Turkey? And indeed, by the people of Western Europe? As it happens, I am inclined to judge that the leadership behavior in these cases is subject to reproach by their citizens as irresponsible and reckless, as well as servile. But this was not Kennedy's point.

This is really the issue underlying the controversy about short-range nuclear forces, missiles and artillery (SNF) in Europe today, this very summer. Is it "responsible alliance behavior" or irresponsible recklessness for NATO to be basing its nuclear deterrence policy, still, on the credible threat of unauthorized action by local commanders in the event of Soviet penetration into Western Europe? (See my Grant Proposal for a study of the Cuban Missile Crisis and Its Implications for Current NATO and Arms Control Policy).

Cell.

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Saturday, Sept 7, 1989

(Nightthoughts)

What was learned from the Cuban Missile crisis,

--by the military: about the likelihood, and the dangers, of civilian officials imposing detailed, real-time civilian control of operations?

--by the military: likewise, for highest-level (Pres, SecDef, JCS) control: i.e., centralization of operations.

The latter issue also arose in Cuba I (see Bissel's comments to me in 1964--relating, I think, to Cuba II).

Parallels: the effort to "set the stage" (literally, in theatrical terms) for public acceptance of US invasion, recognized secretly by top officials as essential to the achievement of "US" (their own, secret) interests and objectives, by means of a combination of provocative external raids and internal sabotage and assassinations/kidnappings with US ships and planes inside enemy waters and airspace:

--Cuba I

--Guatemala? (friendly army)

--Cuba II

--Vietnam, 1961 (flood relief: friendly army)

--Vietnam, 1962-63: strategic hamlet program, advisors, air

--Vietnam, 1964-65: 34A, de Soto patrols

--Nicaragua, 1981-89: contras, Honduran bases, air supply and recon, mining and sabotage by UCLA's.

Analysts of Cuba II rarely address what were the main controversies and internal "lessons" and concerns derived from Cuba II:

--Civil-military relations

--Centralized high-level control

--Need for US troops, to achieve "minimum acceptable objectives" from the point of view of the military;

Overthrow of Castro

In VN: really, the overthrow of the Hanoi regime! The real objective of bombing and invasion of NVN, from the point of view of JCS: the only way, as they saw it, to achieve an "independent, pro-US regime" securely in any part of VN!

--This conflicted, from the point of view of high civilians, with the desire to avoid combat confrontation with either China or the SU:

as in Korea!

This analogy, a lesson learned especially by Democrats (LBJ), impressed civilians more than military, who were willing to see direct conflict with China "if necessary." (Rusk: nuclears would be used).

Yet, unless this risk were faced, could NVN really be restrained from threatening or attacking SVN overwhelmingly?

JFK really did hold back, reject military advice on the "minimum necessary US involvement" (and lie to public about it) in:

Laos

Vietnam, 1961 (I discovered)

Cuba I

Cuba II (reply to recon shootdown; real willingness to invade or attack missiles, vs. trade; "guarantee" to Castro)

Mongoose (failure to endorse need for invasion).

Even though his willingness to threaten, and to contemplate, discuss and plan possible US attack went further, in each case, than the public knew (which "excited" the military, teased them, eventually frustrated them).

(What about Berlin? DomRep?)

Military had had similar experience with Eisenhower, over Indochina, and Quemoy; perhaps, Korea.